Yodit's Magic Paint brush

It was my first enconunter with her in our office barely three months after my joining the Department. She was drawing sketches of a few Eritrean women carrying well ornate pots and jars over their heads, walking down the narrow, tenuous and serpentine ruddy road that passed up and down between the rugged hills. For a moment my eyes got glued to the image, which invoke the spiritual conscience at the bottom of my heart at once. "She is Yodit Mehari" said one of my colleagues, with whom she is supposed to collaborate here. "She is an artist", he continued, "She would do the necessary art work for the department". She turned her face towards me and said, "Hullo". She is quite svelte, beautiful and lissome as much as her paintings. I was quite surprised and shocked at her austere looks and modest appearance. "I began to know about her" I said to myself and left her room.

Two weeks later, Yodit sent a nice portrait reflecting the life styles of the Eritreans women comprising all the nine groups in Eritrea. It was an excellent painting, very impressive and attractive too. I looked at it with great awe and intrigue. I know that there are as many as nine ethnic in Eritrea namely Tigrinya, Saho, Afar, Bilen, Kunama, Hedareb, Tigre, Nara, Rashaida but I had to know yet the dif- ferences among the life styles of these divergent cultural groups. I was in fact taking the help of one of our colleagues... tall and young Simon I and short and stout Simon II whom I refer to very often like this jovially. But this portrait has bared all that I should know at once. It brought the popular adage, a painting or a photo speaks one thousand words live to my memory in a flash of a second.

A few of her paintings had indeed provoked me a lot to brood over and had driven me down the memory lane. During my childhood days, I used to read Chandamama (the Moon), a children's magazine which was published in 18 languages in India for over 25 years. It published not only excellent stories of immense moral value and entertainment, but also carried a number of beautiful running pictures reflecting the story. Those pictures were drawn by Chitra and

Sankar two great artist of the times, who of course are no more now. But they had left an indelible impression not only on me during my childhood but also many of my contemporaries of that time. There were excellent painters during my childhood days and later too in India. Artists like... Vaddadi Paapayya, Bali and Bapu are some household names for their paintings and the greeting cards both in India and outside for a long time. Almost all of them had begun their early career of painting with Children magazines. Though all of them had the magic touch of Ravi Varma and characteristic stamp of Picasso in the early part of their painting career, later they developed their own unique styles of painting which decorated every shop, hotel and house irrespective of the economic status. Another striking feature of their paintings is their characteristic association with the Indian spirituality. There are certain symbolic strokes of the brush, which instantaneously invoke the innate spiritual feelings of an individual among these paintings. It is exactly this that one can find in the lissome strokes of Yodit's magic brush. From Ravi Varma to Picasso through Chitra, Sankar, Papaiah, Bali, Bapu and MF Hussien - all went through this unique transformation from impressionism, pointillism and symbolism to modern art like cubism. At the end of it many including Picasso himself returned to the classical forms of art and painting.

As I landed in Eritrea in October last the Eritrean painting and its characteristic features have been constantly pulling me towards a closer look at it and it is Yodit who fulfilled this for me. As I walked down the main road of Asmara, the Internet cafes and the Tea and Snacks Restaurants that flaunted these captivating painting had invariably appealed to my Indian spiritual sense. Especially the paintings decorating the walls at Afewerki Internet Café, Hotel Nyala, Cathedral Café, Damera Bar and Restaurant and at many other places immensely attracted me towards their artistic splendor and grandeur.

Yodit's paintings like many others' paintings are full of symbolism and impressionism. Though most of them are today drawn from the depa:tment's point of view and its angle of objectives, they invariably consist of the magic touch of the painting. They do not look artificial. Life exudes from them. Finally, an array of typical rural Eritrean images zoom past your inner eye repeatedly, as though they are haunting you, back in home as you lay in your couch. The overlapping hills and vales afar, as a background on the canvas, the tall green trees, around which the gullible women and men in traditional white attire cluster to receive their morning lessons of alphabets and numbers, and the scattered cattle grazing here and there- all reveal amply an African life style that is characteristic of the rural setting of Eritrea. True to the vibrant life all abound in, Yodit's paintings enliven all these indeed.

After a careful study of her paintings for sometime and deeply moved by the sharp touch of her painting to which I preferred earlier, in which she portrayed the life style of all the nine ethnic groups in Eritrea, I thought of purchasing it as a measure of encouragement. Around this time, there was a visiting BESO consultant Tony Matthew's from England. After purchasing it, I felt it would be worthy of presenting it to Tony though the hands of my Director Basilos Zamos in her presence itself with due acknowledgement to her superb skills of painting. It indeed had an electrifying effect on her. Later, she had drawn the cover page of my exhaustive Research Project- Media Education in Eritrean Education, which I had done for the Department of Adult and Media Education so beautifully drawn as to remain a life long memoir for my work. Both my Director and the Director General took interest in the cover page drawn by her and gave her simple suggestions to make it more relevant to the concept.

Yodit's journey of painting had received a very good impetus subsequently. She has no look back now. She has quickly widened her horizon of imagination and started painting taking cues from her own Director Tcabbo. She presented her paintings, which signified and symbolized the nation's mission for expanding the Adult Education, at Sawa Youth Festival held last month at Sawa. Now some of her paintings are on the show at Expo. All of them reflect not only on the inner spiritual stuff of the individual but also evoke a sense of commitment to which they are dedicated.

Like much present- day girls, Yodit too had a tough line of life. Though her parents and sisters did not study as much as she did, they gave her a lot of freedom to go through elementary, junior and secondary school education. Yodit finished her secondary education at 10th class level and joined the art school run by Chinese Professor Yayu. After a good time grounding in painting under him, she moved to learn from Gim and Miam both Chinese Teachers in the field of painting. She very gratefully acknowledges the training she received under them even today. Her eyes twinkled with sparkles as she narrated her training under these eminent Chinese Professors. While struggling to retain her skills of painting, she did her national service as defense solider between 1995-2000. She attended another workshop on painting at Mahabar for 20 days. At the end of her training in the painting, she fortunately got the offer in the Department of Adult and Media Education, Ministry of Education, Asmara. It gives her ample opportunity to show her artistic talents but it would be all the more appreciable if she gets some financial assistance and/or a fellowship for her higher learning and training in painting abroad either in the Europe or in the US.

At the end of all this, what stand between her and me as a bridge of communication are her marvelous, enthralling and unique paintings and nothing else. She doesn't speak a word in English nor could I speak a sentence in Tigrigna. Is not silence the best way of communication as put by great Indian Seers for ages? As long as Yodit's painting keep speaking, no other communication is worth around, I am convinced.

C.S.H.N. MURTHY (Prof.)

ON THE ROAD TO ASSAB

The development of various infrastructures is of great importance to boost up tourism in our country. One of these is the improvement of the road from Asmara to Assab which is covered at this moment in a day, by a four wheel drive land cruiser. There are many tourist attractions along its sides which are easily accessible to touris, such as landscapes, historical places, hot-springs and wild animals,

Tourists start their travel from Asmara to Assab by four wheel drive land cruiser enjoying and observing the landscape scenery that snakes down to Massawa. It skirts the Debrebizen monastery in Nefasit, which was built by Abune Filipos in 1361 AD, the martyrs' cemetery and historical war trenches in Gindae town, the evergreen trees in Dongolo, Maihiwet in Ghahtelay, a juncture to Afabet and Semiyenawi-Bahri, the railway station in Maiatal and the bridge in Dogali which has three arches, dedicated to General Membrea and bears the inscription *Ca Custa Lon Ca Custa.*

They leave Massawa after taking breakfast and, with short tour to the Gulf of Zula glancing at Hirgigo electric generation plant and Hirgigo bay.

When they arrive at the Gulf of Zula, a deep cleft in Eritrea's coast, they can look at Adulis, the ancient port of Eritrea, which is located between Zula and Afta, close to the administrative center of Foro and which had links with Roman Egyptian and Greek empires and distant ports; hot springs, volcanic glass (obsidian) on the hills above the springs and a massive volcanic crater with subsidiary cones near Irefaile.

After this they continue to Gelalo, 130 Kms from Massawa, where its surrounding are rich with wild ass, jackal, fowl and ostrich, along the seacoast and viewing from distance the islands in the Buri-Penisula, such as Dissei. When they turn to the hinterland, they can see hybrid wild asses, goats, ostriches, gazzeles and cattle grazing which is a sign they are approaching to Gelalo semi town. In Gelalo semi-town, they can visit a modern hotel on a high place, close to the sea coast, a kilometer from the center of Gelalo towards the east to relax and watch the islands and

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Notice

The following notice is hereby given to clarify the provisions of Article 5 and 6 of (Regulations to Control Private Residential House Rent in Zoba Maekel) Legal Notice No. 94/2004.

1. *All foreign lessees who are paid in foreign currency shall pay rent in convertible foreign currency.*
2. *Any foreign lessee under a contract of employment with the Government of Eritrea or an agency thereof shall pay rent in Nakfa where it is proven in writing that they are paid partly in Nakfa.*
3. *Any lease contract concluded in Nakfa with foreigners who are paid in foreign currency shall, as of April 1, 2004, be paid in convertible foreign currency.*
4. *Rentals in respect of any lease contract concluded with foreigner on whose behalf remittance has been effected to a bank at the official exchange rate shall be paid by the lessee in Nakfa provided the concerned bank certifies it.*
5. *Computation of rentals on the basis of the floor areas and size of land shall not apply to contracts of lease concluded or to be concluded with foreign lessees.*

Administration of Zoba Maekel
Office of Housing Administration